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1963/11/01

INCOMING TELEGRAM *Department of State*

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Action

Control: 320
Rec'd: NOVEMBER 1, 1963
9:18 AM

FE
Info

FROM: SAIGON

TO: Secretary of State

SS
G
INR
RMR

NO: 841, NOVEMBER 1, 3 PM

PRIORITY

THE PALACE NOTIFIED ME EARLY FRIDAY MORNING THAT PRESIDENT DIEM WANTED TO SEE ME ALONE FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES AFTER THE INTERVIEW WITH ADMIRAL FELT. AFTER THE ADMIRAL HAD GONE, PRESIDENT DIEM SAID

1. THE BUDDHIST BONZES, SPURRED ON BY AMERICAN AGENTS AND WHO, UNDER AMERICAN STIMULUS, HAD CREATED A SO-CALLED PAGODA, HAVE NOW RECEIVED THE UN COMMISSION AND HAVE TOLD THEM THAT THEY WERE THE VICTIMS OF "INTOXICATION" BY AMERICANS. (I WOULD TRANSLAT THE FRENCH WORD "INTOXICATION" AS "HAVING BEEN BULLDOZED BY THE AMERICANS"). IN PARTICULAR ONE BONZE THICH TAM CHAU ADMITTED THE FALSITY OF THE DOCUMENTS WHICH THEY HAD CIRCULATED AND HAD ATTRIBUTED TO THE GVN. ANOTHER BONZE THICH THIEN MINH ADMITTED THE FALSE RUMORS OF A COUP D'ETAT WHICH HE HAD STARTED AND CITED A NUMBER OF AMERICAN NAMES. THE UN COMMISSION WANTED TO HAVE THE NAMES. BROTHER NHU HAD SUGGESTED LAST NIGHT THAT THE AMERICAN NAMES BE WITHHELD BECAUSE, AFTER ALL, WE WERE ALLIES AND WE DID NOT WANT TO WASH OUR DIRTY LINEN IN PUBLIC. GVN WOULD, HOWEVER, FURNISH THE EMBASSY WITH THE NAMES.

2. I SAID THAT I HOPED WE WOULD GET THE NAMES AND THAT HE COULD BE SURE THAT IF ANY AMERICAN HAD COMMITTED AN IMPROPRIETY, I WOULD SEND HIM OUT OF THE COUNTRY.

3. DIEM THEN SPOKE OF A NUMBER OF SMALL STUDENT GROUPS WHO HAD BEEN WORKED ON BY THE COMMUNISTS AND WHO INTENDED TO THROW HAND GRENADES AND PLASTIC BOMBS WHILE THE UN COMMISSION WAS HERE. IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT HE HAD KEPT THE UNIVERSITIES CLOSED. BUT AS SOON AS THE UN COMMISSION LEAVES, THE UNIVERSITIES WILL BE OPENED "LITTLE BY LITTLE" ("AU FUR ET A MESURE").

DECLASSIFIED
Dept. of State (NLK-82-64)
By [illegible] NARS, Date 4/1/82

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PROHIBITED UNLESS "UNCLASSIFIED

[redacted]

SECRET

-2- 841, NOVEMBER 1, 3 PM, FROM SAIGON

4. DIEM REPEATED WHAT HE HAD SAID TO ADMIRAL FELT THAT THE SPECIAL FORCES WERE REALLY UNDER THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF AND THAT IT WAS A VERY SERIOUS THING TO CUT OFF THE SPECIAL FORCES FROM THE PEOPLE WHO WERE DEPENDENT UPON THE BRAIN * NORTH VIETNAM AND WHO NEEDED THEIR SUPPORT. HE SAID GENERAL HARKINS IS A FINE MAN BUT SOME OF HIS ADVISORS WERE NOT LIKED. HE SPOKE PARTICULARLY OF FORMER AMERICAN COLONEL VANN WHOM HE SAID WAS VERY IMPRUDENT.

5. THEN HE SPOKE ABOUT SUGGESTIONS TO CHANGE THE GOVERNMENT WHICH WAS ALL VERY WELL BUT WHO SHOULD BE BROUGHT INTO THE GOVERNMENT? WHENEVER HE ASKED THAT, NOBODY COULD GIVE HIM ANY NAMES. ALSO THE QUESTION OF TIMING WAS VERY IMPORTANT. HE INTENDED TO DO IT AT THE PROPER TIME.

6. HE HOPED THAT WHEN I WAS IN WASHINGTON, I WOULD ASK MR. COLBY CIA AND FORMER AMBASSADOR NOLTING ABOUT BROTHER NHU BECAUSE THE FACT WAS THAT BROTHER NHU DID NOT WISH POWER BUT THAT HE HAD SUCH A FLEXIBLE SPIRIT AND WAS ALWAYS SO FULL OF GOOD ADVICE THAT PEOPLE WOULD ASK HIM FOR HIS ADVICE. WHEN THEY HAD A DIFFICU PROBLEM, BROTHER NHU WOULD ALWAYS FIND A SOLUTION. MR. COLBY HAD COME TO PRESIDENT DIEM AND HAD SAID THAT IT WAS TOO BAD THAT BROTHER NHU WAS LIVING IN AN IVORY TOWER, HE SHOULD GO OUT MORE. AMBASSADOR NOLTING HAD AGREED AND IT WAS "DUE TO THEIR PRESSURE" THAT BROTHER NHU HAD STARTED GOING OUT AND MAKING HIMSELF KNOWN. BUT THEN WHEN HE DID GO OUT, PEOPLE SAID HE WAS USURPING POWER AND IT WAS THEN THAT ALL THE BAD PUBLICITY BEGAN.

7. WHEN I GOT UP TO GO, HE SAID: PLEASE TELL PRESIDENT KENNEDY THAT I AM A GOOD AND A FRANK ALLY, THAT I WOULD RATHER BE FRANK AND SETTLE QUESTIONS NOW THAN TALK ABOUT THEM AFTER WE HAVE LOST EVERYTHING. (THIS LOOKED LIKE A REFERENCE TO A POSSIBLE COUP TELL PRESIDENT KENNEDY THAT I TAKE ALL HIS SUGGESTIONS VERY SERIOUSLY AND WISH TO CARRY THEM OUT BUT IT IS A QUESTION OF TIMING.

8. COMMENT: I FEEL THAT THIS IS ANOTHER STEP IN THE DIALOGUE

SECRET

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-3- 841, NOVEMBER 1, [illegible], FROM SAIGON

WHICH TRUAN THOUGHT DIEM HAD BROKEN AT OUR MEETING IN DALAT ON SUNDAY NIGHT. IF HE, WANTS TO MAKE A PACKAGE DEAL, I WOULD THINK WE WERE IN A POSITION TO DO IT. THE CONDITIONS OF MY RETURN WOULD BE PROPITIOUS FOR IT. IN EFFECT HE SAID: TELL US WHAT YOU WANT AND WE'LL DO IT. HOPE TO DISCUSS THIS IN WASHINGTON. SEE ALSO NHU'S STATEMENT ON RELEASE OF ALL BUDDHISTS AND STUDENTS NOW IN JAIL.

ON A PERSONAL BASIS, AS SOON AS ADMIRAL FELT HAD LEFT THE ROOM, I SAID THAT I COULD ASSURE DIEM THAT THESE RUMORS OF ASSASSINATION HAD NOT IN ANY WAY AFFECTED MY FEELING OF ADMIRATION AND PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP FOR HIM OR FOR VIETNAM. I HAD LONG ADMIRED HIS COURAGE BEFORE COMING TO SAIGON AND SINCE GETTING TO KNOW HIM, I HAD FORMED SENTIMENTS OF FRIENDSHIP FOR HIM. I WAS GRATEFUL TO HIM FOR BEING SO EXTREMELY NICE TO MY WIFE AND ME. THIS WAS SOMETHING WHICH NO AMOUNT OF FALSE RUMORS COULD POSSIBLY EFFECT.

GP-1.

LODGE

BAP

NOTE: ADVANCE COPY DELIVERED TO O/S-O AT 9:33 AM NOVEMBER 1ST.
PASSED WHITE HOUSE 11/1/63 9:37 AM

*AS RECEIVED. WILL BE SERVICED UPON REQUEST.

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